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ABSTRACT

A secondary analysis of eight years' cumulative results from the annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward public schools is presented. These eight polls reveal a public that has confidence in its schools and its teachers and supports specific innovations, particularly career education, moral education, and various types of alternative public schools. The public is concerned about discipline, basic skills, class size, and size of schools; and is strongly opposed to forced busing for racial integration, expanding students' rights, and giving students a greater voice in decision making in schools. In the 1976 Eighth Annual Gallup Poll, discipline continues to be cited by adults as the most important problem in public schools. Discipline is followed by problems associated with busing and integration. The third critical issue is educational finance. Criticisms of poor or inappropriate curricula are becoming more frequent. Other trends are also reported. A guide for conducting a local opinion poll, reprinted from The Gallup Poll of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969 - 1973 is included. (MV)

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Fastback 94

What the People Think About Their Schools: Gallup's Findings

Vernon Smith and George H. Gallup

PHI DELTA KAPPA EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

NATION
TOTALS

TINGS GIVEN HE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1976 %	1975 %	197 %
	13	13	18
	29	30	30
	28	28	21
	10	9	6
	6	7	
ion't know/ no answer	14	13	2

VERNON H. SMITH

GEORGE H. GALLUP

Vernon H. Smith is professor of education and director of the Center for Options in Public Education, Indiana University. He has been a teacher, department chairman, and curriculum supervisor in the public schools. For about 15 years, he has been working with public school systems on the design, development, and evaluation of alternatives in public education. His latest book, *Alternatives in Education: Freedom to Choose* (with Robert D. Barr and Daniel J. Burke), was published by Phi Delta Kappa in 1976 as one of the fraternity's Bicentennial monographs.

In 1935, George Gallup founded the American Institute of Public Opinion to measure the public's attitudes on social, political, and economic issues of the day. He is currently chairman of the institute as well as chairman of the board of the Gallup Organization, Inc. He is also president of Gallup International Research Institutes; chairman of the Board of Trustees, Quill and Scroll Foundation (an international honorary society for high school journalists organized by Gallup); chairman of the National Municipal League Council; chairman of the All-America Cities Award Committee; and founder and head of Audience Research, Inc. A teacher and professor at four universities in the twenties and thirties, Gallup is the author of many articles and books on public opinion and advertising research.

Series Editor, Donald W. Robinson

WHAT THE PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THEIR SCHOOLS: GALLUP'S FINDINGS

Including an Analysis of the Findings of the First Eight Annual Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools; the 1976 Poll; and a Guide for Conducting Local Polls.

By Vernon Smith and
George H. Gallup

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SECTION I
Vernon Smith

Eight Years of the Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, 1969-1976: A Secondary Analysis

Each year since the first poll in 1969, I have looked forward to the Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools which appears annually in the *Phi Delta Kappan*. The results stimulate discussions in my undergraduate and graduate courses in education. They also spark discussions, and sometimes debates, among our faculty. Each year some of the poll results, but usually not all, attract the news media, which interpret or misinterpret them to the general public. The poll is more than a valuable source of information on public education. It is a learning experience for the profession, the media, and the public. The poll's most irritating characteristic and its greatest strength is that it raises more questions and issues than it answers.

Looking at eight annual polls as a whole and attempting to analyze and synthesize the results is a very different task from looking at the results of a single poll, and is definitely more subjective. The cumulative results of the eight polls suggest a different message, one that is dramatically different from the news stories and editorials on the annual results and somewhat different

from Gallup's own annual interpretations. Overall, the polls show an unusual consistency in the public's attitude toward the public schools, a deep confidence in the schools, a willingness to accept new ideas, a remarkable patience with the schools' shortcomings, and a strong desire for shared responsibility between the public and the profession.

In 1973 Phi Delta Kappa published *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973*. It brought the first five annual polls together in one volume, with an introductory chapter by Dr. George Gallup titled "The First Five Years: Trends and Observations." Gallup began with the following paragraphs:

> The public schools have passed through a trying period during the five years covered by the surveys reported in this book (1969-1973). The dominant mood of the nation during this period has been one of disillusionment brought about by the war in Vietnam, student protests, racial strife, and Watergate. Nevertheless, respect for and confidence in the public schools, this peculiarly American institution, remain at a high level.
>
> Education in the United States is still today widely regarded as the royal road to success in life. At the same time, a few clouds are appearing on the horizon; unless those who are interested in the continued strength and well-being of the public schools heed these portents, public education in the nation could face a worrisome future.

Gallup's lines could have been written today. Whether we had passed through one "trying period" and are now in another is not worth debate. A few more clouds are on the horizon today, and the developing storm may be headed for the schools. To the disillusion of the early seventies has been added a conservatism that is affecting the society and the schools.

Gallup referred to the public's "shocking lack of information" about the public schools. This has to be considered in analyzing the results of the eight polls. A public more knowledgeable about its schools would perhaps have responded differently to these surveys.

Gallup also suggests that the schools have had a "poor press" and says, "Usually the 'good' news will go neglected unless school administrators themselves take the trouble to find it and see that it is dealt with in an interesting and informative manner." While he is certainly right that bad happenings are more newsworthy than good happenings or no happenings, we might be hard pressed to find an untapped vein of good news in many schools today.

Sources of Public Knowledge About the Schools

The majority of the people are not well informed about their schools (1969)* and would like to know more about the local schools (1969, 1974). The most frequently cited sources of information on the schools are students and newspapers (1969, 1973). Since the single best information source about local schools for the general public and for parents is the students, the schools need to explore the ways in which their almost 50 million public information representatives daily interpret education at home and in the community.

The Public's Confidence in Public Education

The students must be doing an effective job, because the most striking feature of the polls is the deep and continuing confidence of the public in its schools. This confidence is probably not a product of the press or of the media in general. The picture from the eight polls is of citizens who have confidence in their schools, who place the blame for children's poor experiences in school and for declining test scores on other agencies, and who wish to share the responsibility for solving the schools' major problems.

In the first poll (1969), 75% of the respondents and 81% of public school parents said they would like to have a child of theirs become a public school teacher. Coming after more than a decade of severe criticism of the schools, this is a noteworthy endorsement of public education. The question was repeated in 1972, and 61% of the total and 71% of public school parents still wanted their children to become teachers.

The fifth poll (1973) included several questions that indicated confidence in the schools. Ninety-five percent of the respondents felt that the schools are extremely important (76%) or fairly important (19%) to future success. Sixty-one percent of the total and 69% of public school parents felt that education was better in 1973 than it was when they were in school. Eighty-two percent of the parents thought that their children were learning the things they should be learning in school, and 83% stated that their children went to school because they wanted to, not because they had to.

Starting with the sixth poll (1974), respondents were asked to

*Years in parentheses refer to the year of the annual poll that provides the stated information.

grade the public schools in their community with a letter grade: A, B, C, D, or Fail. The results for the three years (1974-1976) follow:

	1974	1975	1976
A rating	18%	13%	13%
B rating	30%	30%	29%
C rating	21%	28%	28%
D rating	6%	9%	10%
F rating	5%	7%	6%
Don't know/ no answer	20%	13%	14%

In addition, parents with children in the public schools gave 64% As and Bs in 1974, 63% As and Bs in 1975, and dropped to 50% As and Bs in 1976.

In the eighth poll (1976), a surprising 90% of the respondents indicated a willingness to serve on citizens advisory committees to deal with school problems. Further, 77% believed that the schools should offer courses for parents which would help them to help their children in school, and 51% stated that they would be willing to pay additional taxes to support such a program. These results must be contrasted with a December 6, 1976, headline in *Education U.S.A.* reporting on a National Education Association survey of public school teachers, "PARENT APATHY SEEN AS BIGGEST PROBLEM." There seems to be a discrepancy here.

When children do poorly in school, the public doesn't blame the schools. In the fourth poll (1972), this question was asked: "When some children do poorly in school, some place the blame on the children, some on the children's home life, some on the school, and some on the teachers. Of course, all of these things share the blame, but where would you place the chief blame?" Results: 57%, on children's home life; 14%, on children; 12%, on teachers; 6%, on schools; 11%, no opinion.

In a similar vein in 1976, the public blamed other causes for the decline in national test scores. To the question: "Here are some reasons that have been given to explain the decline in national test scores. Will you look over these reasons and then tell me which ones you think are most responsible for this decline?" (respondents could

name more than one), the public responded: 65%, less parent attention, concern, and supervision; 52%, students aren't motivated; 49%, too much television; 49%, society is too permissive; 39%, teacher is giving less attention; 16%, it's easier to get into college now; 16%, the tests are not reliable; 10%, schools are expanding the number of courses.

The Public's Major Concerns

The poll itself may suffer from a "poor press." It seems safe to predict that when the 1977 poll results are released, some headlines will announce that the public once again considers discipline to be the number one problem in the schools. Each year the poll has included this question: "What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?" Every year but one, discipline has been the most frequently mentioned problem. (Finances was first in 1971.) But the first ranking of discipline in seven of the eight polls is far from the complete story. Not since 1969, when 26% of the respondents cited discipline as one of the biggest problems, have even as many as one-fourth of the respondents rated it so. Which is the more significant result: that 22% of the people rate discipline as a serious problem, or that over three-fourths of the people do not rate discipline as a serious concern? The concern for discipline has been overrated and over publicized.

The listing of the most frequently cited "biggest problems" (Table 1) shows a remarkable consistency. Over the last five years, the public has cited discipline, integration, finances, drugs, and the difficulty of getting good teachers as the major problems in public education. During this period poor curriculum (1976) was the only other category cited by more than 10% of the respondents. Obviously, this item is related to the current back-to-basics concern and will bear watching in future polls.

Other questions in the annual polls also get at the public's basic concerns. For example, in the first poll (1969), when 26% of the respondents cited discipline as one of the biggest problems, the question was asked, "If you were to become a school board member, what changes in the schools would you favor?" Fifteen percent indicated that they would change curriculum; 14%, professional staff; 11%, buildings and facilities; 9%, discipline procedures; 4%, financial structure; 3%, transportation systems; and 2%, integration

policies. This suggests an interesting perception on the part of the public. The biggest problems do not seem to correspond with most-needed changes.

TABLE 1
Items Most Frequently Cited as Biggest Problems in the Eight Annual Polls*

1969		1970		1971	
1. Discipline	26%	1. Discipline	18%	1. Finances	23%
2. Facilities	22%	2. Integration	17%	2. Integration	21%
3. Teachers	17%	3. Finances	17%	3. Discipline	14%
4. Finances	14%	4. Teachers	12%	4. Facilities	13%
5. Integration	13%	5. Facilities	11%	5. Drugs	12%
		6. Drugs	11%	6. Teachers**	11%

1972		1973		1974	
1. Discipline	23%	1. Discipline	22%	1. Discipline	23%
2. Finances	19%	2. Integration	18%	2. Integration	16%
3. Integration	18%	3. Finances	16%	3. Finances	13%
4. Teachers	14%	4. Teachers	13%	4. Drugs	13%
		5. Drugs	10%	5. Teachers	11%

1975		1976	
1. Discipline	23%	1. Discipline	22%
2. Integration	15%	2. Integration	15%
3. Finances	14%	3. Finances	14%
4. Teachers	11%	4. Poor Curriculum	14%
5. Size of School/ Classes	10%	5. Drugs	11%
6. Drugs	9%	6. Teachers	11%

*With the exception of "drugs" in 1975, all items with a response of less than 10% have been omitted. For the complete ranking of all items, see the annual poll results in Section II of this fastback.

**The general category "teachers" was broken down into two categories in the third poll (1971): "teachers' lack of interest/ability" and "teachers (general)." The two are combined here. From the fifth poll (1973) to the eighth poll (1976) this category was renamed "difficulty in getting good teachers."

On the other hand, respondents may be perceiving relationships among curriculum, teaching, and discipline. In the 1971 poll, this question was asked: "Some people say that if the schools and the teachers interest the children in learning, most discipline problems disappear. Do you agree or disagree?" Results: 76%, agreed; 18%, disagreed; 6%, had no opinion.

In the 1969 poll, this question was asked: "How do you feel about the discipline in the local schools—is it too strict, not strict enough, or just about right?" Fifty-two percent of the public school parents responded that it was about right. There are still many unanswered questions on this complex issue.

In the 1976 poll, a new question elicited concerns of the public. Respondents were asked if they would like to serve on any of 20 advisory committees. The results suggest additional concerns (see Section II, p. 37).

Another question in the 1976 poll also elicits the public's concerns: "Which of these ways do you think would do most to improve the quality of public school education overall?" Results (listing those over 10% only): 51%, more attention to the basic skills; 50%, enforce stricter discipline; 42%, meet individual needs of students; 41%, improve parent-school relations; 39%, emphasize moral development; 38%, emphasize career education and salable skills; 29%, help teachers keep up with new methods; 27%, raise academic standards; 14%, raise teachers' salaries; 14%, increase homework.

Receptiveness to New Ideas

In general, the public seems ready to accept new ideas in curriculum and in school organization (see Table 2). The majority have usually favored the new idea with only two ideas disapproved—the voucher system by a small margin in 1970 and 1971, and live-in boarding schools for children with bad home conditions in 1976. The year-around school lost by a small margin in 1970 and was approved by about the same margin in 1972.

When the public approved nongraded schools by a margin of 71% to 22% (with 7% no opinion) in 1972, the survey reported, "Approval of this idea is so high throughout the nation that the movement toward nongraded schools will undoubtedly accelerate over the next decade." Whether the movement has accelerated to

date would be difficult to determine, but the public's enthusiasm declined slightly to 64% in favor by 1974.

Another factor is the public's overall attitude toward changes that is not reflected in these responses to specific innovations. The following question has been asked in three polls: "Do you feel that the local public schools are not interested enough in trying new ways and methods or are they too ready to try new ideas?"

	1970	1971	1974
Not interested enough	20%	24%	24%
Too ready to try	21%	22%	20%
Just about right	32%	32%	32%
Don't know/ no answer	27%	22%	24%

Here again the public is unusually consistent, but there is barely more support for change than opposition to it, with the largest group in the satisfied category.

TABLE 2
Public Attitudes Toward Change and Innovation

Suggested Change	% Approve	% Disapprove
Job Training Programs (1975)	86	11
More Career Education (1976)	80	5
(1973)	90	7
Moral Education (1975)	79	15
Sex Education (1970)	65	28
Standard National Test for High School Graduation (1976)	65	31
Nongraded Schools (1975)	64	28
(1972)	71	22
Alternative Schools (1973)	62	26
Fundamental (Back-to-Basics) Schools (1975)	57	33
Schools Without Walls (1972)	56	34
Out-of-School (Action) Learning (1972)	56	35

	% Approve	% Disapprove
Year-Around Schools (1972)	53	41
(1970)	42	49
Performance Contracts (1971)	49	28
More Independent Study (1971)	31	22
Open Education (1975) (60% didn't know what an open school was)	13	10
Voucher System (1971)	38	44
(1970)	43	46
Live-In Boarding Schools (1976)	39	50

Attitudes Toward Students

In spite of the public's strong support for many specific innovations, the polls reveal a deep conservatism in the areas of students' rights and students' involvement in decision making within the school. The attitude of the public and of parents toward students may be the most serious problem in education today.

The respondents, including parents, have favored greater regulation of students' dress (1969), stricter discipline (1970, 1971), corporal punishment (1970), and parental censorship of textbooks (1975).

At the same time, the respondents have rejected the idea of allowing *married* pregnant girls to attend school (1970), more rights and privileges for students who are 18 and have the right to vote (1972), and reducing the compulsory attendance age for youngsters not interested in school (1972, 1974, 1976).

In both the 1972 and 1975 polls, four times as many people thought that students had too many rights and privileges as those who thought they had too few. The 1975 results: 45%, too many; 27%, just right; 10%, not enough; 18%, no opinion.

The 1970 poll included the question: "Should high school students have more say about what goes on within the school on matters such as curriculum? teachers? school rules? student dress?" This poll included a sample of eleventh- and twelfth-grade students from the same communities as the adults polled. The marked differences in the results of parents of children in the public schools and of these high school juniors and seniors are noteworthy.

Should students have more to say about:	% Yes	% No	% No Opinion
Curriculum?			
Parents	40	55	5
Students	83	15	2
Teachers?			
Parents	22	74	4
Students	53	43	4
School rules?			
Parents	38	58	4
Students	77	22	1
Student dress?			
Parents	40	56	4
Students	76	23	1

Parents were slightly more in favor of students' rights than the general public. The curious ambivalence of the public and of parents is illustrated by the response to a question on the 1976 poll. When asked which quality was most important in the development of a child, the one that ranked first was "learning to think for oneself." Yet a majority of the general public (57%) and of parents of public school children (56%) don't want high school students to determine their own dress in the schools.

Attitudes Toward Teachers

The general public is certainly sympathetic toward the teaching profession. Most people pay the profession the highest compliment in wanting a child of theirs to become a teacher (1969, 1972). When asked in what ways the local schools are particularly good (1972, 1973), the curriculum and the teachers ranked a close first and second, way ahead of facilities, which was third.

The public has rejected, by wide margins, the idea of cutting teachers' salaries to save money (1971, 1976). By similar margins, the public is opposed to reducing the number of teachers by increasing class size (1971, 1976). An overwhelming 90% of the public and 96% of professional educators believe that class size makes a difference (1973), even though most of the research on class size fails to support

this belief. The public did favor reducing administrative personnel to cut costs (1971, 1976).

The public has generally favored teacher organizations and in the 1976 poll favored extending teacher bargaining powers to class size, curriculum, and teaching methods (52% favor, 39% oppose). Yet 38% believe unionization of teachers has hurt the quality of public education; 27% think it has made no difference; and 22% think that it has helped (1976).

The majority are opposed to teacher tenure (1970, 1972, 1974) and to teacher strikes (1969, 1975). But the margin on strikes in 1975 was slim, with 48% against and 45% in favor.

Constitutional Issues

In the 1974 poll, respondents were asked about four suggested amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The public favored an amendment to permit prayer in the schools (77% for, 17% against), favored an amendment to permit federal financial aid to parochial schools (52% for, 36% against), favored an amendment to reduce financial inequities among school districts (66% for, 22% against), and favored an amendment to prohibit busing for the purpose of racial integration (72% for, 18% against).

While the public is strongly opposed to busing for integration, it is not nearly as opposed to school integration by other means. In the 1973 poll, 30% felt that "more should be done to integrate the schools throughout the nation," 38% wanted less done, and 23% wanted no change. Further, when the public was asked why families living in big cities move to the suburbs, city congestion (37%) and fear of crime (24%) outranked the desire to get away from minorities (14%) and better educational opportunities (12%). In an earlier poll (1971), 40% thought that school integration had improved racial relations, and 35% thought that it had worked against them.

In the 1975 poll only four in 10 of the respondents "had heard of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling regarding the suspension of students." Of this group, 26% thought the Court had gone too far, and 67% that it had not.

More Questions Than Answers

Earlier I stated that the poll's most irritating characteristic and its greatest strength is that it raises more questions and issues than it answers.

Because the poll attempts to cover the broad range of educational issues, many questions are asked only once. Other questions are repeated occasionally, and only a few questions are repeated each year. While this procedure is well justified, it is also frustrating.

A brief illustration would be the 1975 questions on open education. The opening question was, "Do you happen to know what is meant by the 'open' school concept or idea?" Surprisingly, after more than a decade of publicity on the open school and the open classroom, only 27% said they knew what was meant by open schools; 60% didn't know, 13% weren't sure. Of the 27% who knew, about half (13%) approved of open schools and 10% disapproved with 4% "don't know" or "no answer." This is one of the few instances, if not the only instance, where the poll asked the respondents if they knew the meaning of the concept they were judging. One has to wonder how the approval-disapproval would have come out if respondents hadn't first been asked about the meaning. Did more people know the meaning of the open school concept in 1975 than in 1970, or fewer? Does the 13 to 10 approval-disapproval ratio indicate more support for open education or less than in previous years?

Another problem arises when a question in the poll is too complete. In 1975 respondents were asked: "In some U.S. cities, parents of schoolchildren are being given the choice of sending their children to a special public school that has strict discipline, including a dress code, and that puts emphasis on the three Rs. If you lived in one of these cities and had children of school age, would you send them to such a school or not?" When 57% responded yes to this question (33% no), it is impossible to tell whether they were endorsing stricter discipline, the dress code, the three Rs, any two of these, or all three. The same poll had already indicated that discipline was the biggest problem. Why would 43% not respond yes to a school with stricter discipline?

The wording of this question when compared with the wording of the open school question raises another question. If respondents had first been asked if they knew the meaning of the "fundamental" school concept, would the 90% who approved or disapproved have said yes?

Asking the public to give a letter-grade evaluation to the schools

is a clever device. But what do letter grades mean? With all of the media devoting major coverage to declining test scores in 1976, how can 13% of the public and 16% of the parents give their local schools an A? Another question in the 1976 poll asked respondents to rate juvenile courts' work as excellent, fair, or poor. Would excellent, fair, and poor be more meaningful descriptors for schools than A, B, C, D, and F?

The poll results don't always agree with other indicators. If 90% of the public is willing to serve on citizens advisory committees, and if 78% of public school parents want courses to help them help their children in school (both 1976), how can a 1976 National Education Association poll find that teachers say parental apathy is the biggest problem in classroom instruction? Do people hide an apathetic attitude toward schools when responding to a poll on education?

These few illustrations show how each question on the annual poll raises additional questions.

Summary: Cause for Concern

These eight polls reveal a public that has confidence in and supports its schools and its teachers. The public supports specific innovations, particularly career education, moral education, and various types of alternative public schools. It is concerned about discipline, the basic skills, class size, and size of schools. (In 1973, 57% thought that high schools were getting too large, 15% thought they were about right, and 13% not large enough. The respondents' median ideal size was 500.) The public is strongly opposed to forced busing for racial integration, expanding students' rights, and giving students a greater voice in decision making in schools.

Respondents in the 1976 poll said that the most important quality in the development of a child was "learning to think for oneself." How do they think students will develop this quality if they are not allowed to make decisions in school?

In the 1975 poll, 96% thought that it was important for students to read well enough to follow an instruction manual. Ninety-two percent thought students should be able to write a letter of application using correct grammar and correct spelling. Eighty-seven percent thought that students should know enough arithmetic to be able to figure out the area of a room. *But* only 49% wanted students to know something about the major nations of the world

today, and 33% wanted them to know something about the history of mankind.

In the 1973 poll, respondents were asked whether their overall attitude toward the public schools in their communities had become more favorable or less favorable in recent years. The results: 32%, more favorable; 36%, less favorable; 32%, no change. In the three polls since 1973, there are a few additional indicators that the public's attitude toward public schools is becoming less favorable. Could the public's patience with its schools be wearing thin?

I'm looking forward to the Ninth Annual Poll. Perhaps it will answer some of these questions.

SECTION II
George H. Gallup

Eighth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools 1976

A Project Jointly Conducted by the Gallup Poll and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation

Purpose of the Study

The eighth annual survey of the series has attempted to measure the attitudes of Americans toward their public schools. Each year great care is taken to include new issues of concern to both educators and the public, as well as trend questions which have ongoing impact in the educational world.

The 1976 survey was funded by /I/D/E/A/, the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc., an affiliate of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. In prior years these studies have been sponsored by CFK Ltd. and the Ford Foundation.

To make certain that the current survey would embrace important issues in the field of education, a group of educators, together with the project directors from Gallup, met in Miami early in 1976 to discuss and evaluate preliminary questions and possible themes.

The group of panel members included: James Betchkal, editor, *American School Board Journal*, National School Boards Association, Washington, D.C.; Edward Brainard, director, Leadership Development, Colorado Department of Education, Denver (now professor of education, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley);

B. Frank Brown, division director, /I/D/E/A/, Melbourne, Florida; Stanley M. Elam, editor, *Phi Delta Kappan*, Bloomington, Indiana; William J. Ellena, superintendent, Public Schools, Charlottesville, Virginia; Sidney P. Marland, Jr., president, College Entrance Examination Board, New York City; William Mitchell, superintendent, Public Schools, Greeley, Colorado; John W. Porter, state superintendent of public instruction, Department of Education, Lansing, Michigan; Samuel G. Sava, executive director, /I/D/E/A/, and vice president, Educational Activities, Charles F. Kettering Foundation, Dayton, Ohio; Suzanne Sepper, teacher, Bayview Elementary School, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and M. Donald Thomas, superintendent of schools, Salt Lake City School District, Utah.

We wish to thank the above-mentioned individuals for their valuable suggestions.

Research Procedure

The Sample—The sample in this survey embraced a total of 1,549 adults (18 years and older). It is described as a modified probability sample of the nation. Personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in every area of the nation and in all types of communities. A full analysis of the sample will be found at the end of this report.

Time of Interviewing—The fieldwork for this study was carried out from April 21 through April 25, 1976.

The Interviewing Form—Questions included in the survey instrument were selected following extensive pretesting by the trained staff of interviewers maintained by the Gallup organizations.

Findings from this report apply only to the country as a whole and not to specific local communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local communities compare with the national norm.*

Introduction

Aside from its historical significance, the year 1976 may well prove to be the turning point in the public's attitudes toward the public schools. Evidence from the present survey indicates a leveling off in the downward trend of recent years in the public's attitudes toward the public schools.

The public schools, like other public institutions, reflect the

*Suggestions for such a local survey are outlined in Section III of this fastback.

major trends in society. And the year 1976 has witnessed a nation-wide shift toward more traditional values in almost every field.

Whether we have come to the end of the era of permissiveness is yet to be seen. The fact remains, however, that the public is now demanding stricter rules in dealing with the behavior of the young and higher standards in the public schools.

Juvenile delinquency, increasing yearly, has focused attention upon the need for moral education not only in the home but in the schools. Laws in many states are being changed to permit stiffer sentences for young offenders. We can hope that such laws, and new ways that are being tried in schools for dealing with the problem of discipline, will bring about a lessening of the turmoil found in so many cities.

A growing demand to place greater emphasis on the basics in the school curriculum is evidenced in the findings of the present survey. Meeting this demand could result in higher national test scores and increased respect for the public schools.

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1976

Discipline continues to head the list of major problems when a sample of the nation's adults cite what they perceive as the most important problems of the public schools in their own communities. In fact, discipline has been named most often seven times during the last eight years.

The percentage of respondents citing discipline as the number one problem, however, has shown no increase during recent years. Next to discipline, and in second place, are the problems associated with busing and integration. In third place this year is "lack of proper financial support." These were also named second and third, respectively, in last year's survey.

The one significant change from 1975 is the marked increase in the number of persons in the sample who cite "a poor curriculum." This complaint, listed seventh in importance last year, has moved up to fourth, undoubtedly because of wide publicity given to the drop in national test scores and growing concern about the number of functional illiterates among school leavers.

Below, in order of mentions, is the list of major problems of the local public schools as perceived by the residents of these communities:

1. Lack of discipline
2. Integration/segregation/busing
3. Lack of proper financial support
4. Poor curriculum
5. Use of drugs
6. Difficulty of getting "good" teachers
7. Parents' lack of interest
8. Size of school/classes
9. School board policies
10. Pupils' lack of interest

1976 Rating of the Public Schools

A five-point scale, familiar to the American public, was employed for the first time in 1974 to establish a base for measuring the public's perceptions of the quality of public school education in their own communities.

The question asked is this:

> Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here—A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

A significant drop in the public's ratings was recorded between the years 1974 and 1975. However, the decline has now leveled off, with ratings for 1976 being virtually the same as for 1975.

Here are the ratings given the public schools nationally for the last three years:

	National Totals		
Ratings Given the Public Schools	**1976** %	**1975** %	**1974** %
A rating	13	13	18
B rating	29	30	30
C rating	28	28	21
D rating	10	9	6
FAIL	6	7	5
Don't know/no answer	14	13	20

If the top two positions—A and B—are combined, and the bottom three—C,D, and FAIL—are combined, the findings indicate that the lowest ratings come from those parents who send their children to private or parochial schools. Those with children in the public

schools give the highest ratings to the schools, but even in the case of this group only 50% give the schools an A or B rating. This contrasts with only 34% of those whose children attend private or parochial schools who give an A or B rating.

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	13	12	16	6
B rating	29	26	34	28
C rating	28	26	30	40
D rating	10	9	10	12
FAIL	6	7	5	4
Don't know/ no answer	14	20	5	10

When ratings given by the major socioeconomic and demographic groups are analyzed, it is evident that the people who are least satisfied with the quality of education offered in their local schools are the recent graduates, the 18 to 29 age group, those who live in the center cities as opposed to the suburbs, and citizens who live in Western states.

	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't know/ No Answer
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**13**	**29**	**28**	**10**	**6**	**14**
Sex						
Men	11	32	28	11	4	14
Women	14	27	29	9	7	14
Race						
White	13	30	28	9	6	14
Nonwhite	10	21	33	13	9	14
Age						
18 to 29 years	8	25	33	15	6	13
30 to 49 years	15	30	30	10	5	10
50 years and over	15	31	22	6	7	19

	A	B	C	D	FAIL	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Education						
Grade school	18	22	27	8	5	20
High school	12	27	30	11	7	13
College	11	37	25	9	6	12
Community size						
1 million and over	11	27	32	13	6	11
500,000-999,999	11	34	21	13	7	14
50,000-499,999	10	26	32	11	10	11
2,500-49,999	13	33	25	8	2	19
Under 2,500	17	29	28	6	4	16
Central City	7	21	32	16	11	12
Suburbs	14	34	28	7	5	12
All other	16	30	27	7	3	17
Region						
East	11	31	29	10	5	14
Midwest	16	32	27	8	4	13
South	13	27	29	9	7	15
West	10	24	30	15	8	13

How To Improve the Quality of the Public Schools

After having obtained ratings of their public schools by different groups, our interviewers sought to determine what could be done, in the opinion of respondents, to improve the quality of local education. And as an aid, each respondent was handed a card listing a dozen suggestions and had the opportunity to choose as many as he or she wished.

Answers to this question correspond closely with those given in answer to the question concerning the most important problems faced by the local schools.

This approach sheds further light on the public's current concern that the schools should "devote more attention to teaching of basic skills." This is the most popular suggestion; 51% of all respondents chose it. Close behind—in fact, with virtually the same number of choices—is the suggestion to "enforce stricter discipline."

The proposals that get the third and fourth highest number of mentions are to "meet individual needs of students," with 42%, and to "improve parent/school relations," with 41%.

The top three choices of parents whose children now attend the public schools are the same as the top three of the general public. Oddly enough, parents place even higher on their list, in fourth

place, "instruction in morals"—which has been generally regarded as the sole responsibility of home and church.

The question:

Which of these ways do you think would do most to *improve* the quality of public school education overall?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Devote more attention to teaching of basic skills	51	47	55	60
Enforce stricter discipline	50	47	52	64
Meet individual needs of students	42	39	47	44
Improve parent/school relations	41	43	36	47
Emphasize moral development	39	34	45	49
Emphasize career education and development of salable skills	38	39	36	37
Provide opportunities for teachers to keep up to date regarding new methods	29	27	32	29
Raise academic standards	27	28	23	38
Raise teachers' salaries	14	15	16	8
Increase amount of homework	14	12	17	21
Build new buildings	9	8	12	7
Lower age for compulsory attendance	5	4	6	1
None	1	1	•	
Don't know/no answer	4	4	2	3

•Less than 1%

(Totals add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Nationwide Test for Graduation

A consensus was found in favor of requiring high school students to pass a standard examination in order to receive a diploma.

Present survey findings on this question show a substantial shift in the public's attitude during the last 18 years. The question posed in 1958 by the Gallup Poll is the same one as that used in the 1976 survey, as follows:

> Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

The findings for the two surveys show:

	National Test for Graduation	
	1976	1958
	%	%
In favor of such a test	65	50
Opposed	31	39
No opinion	4	11

It is the least well educated, strangely enough, who are most in favor of such a requirement. The same finding was reported in the 1958 study. Those who have had the advantage of one or more years of college education are much more evenly divided: 53% are in favor, 44% opposed. Those with a grade school education vote 76% in favor, 18% opposed.

Persons who are in the 18 to 29 age bracket are less enthusiastic than older persons, possibly because some may believe that such a test would have deprived them of their own diplomas.

Apart from these differences, the survey findings show that a majority favors such a requirement in all sections of the nation and in the large cities as well as the small towns.

Results by major groups:

	Yes, They Should	No, They Should Not	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**65**	**31**	**4**
Sex			
Men	66	31	3
Women	65	30	5

	Yes, They Should %	No, They Should Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Race			
White	65	31	4
Nonwhite	67	27	6
Age			
18 to 29 years	56	41	3
30 to 49 years	67	30	3
50 years and over	71	23	6
Education			
Grade school	76	18	6
High school	69	27	4
College	53	44	3
Community size			
1 million and over	70	25	5
500,000-999,999	69	28	3
50,000-499,999	67	31	2
2,500-49,999	68	31	1
Under 2,500	58	35	7
Region			
East	65	31	4
Midwest	66	30	4
South	64	31	5
West	67	31	2

The Public's Conclusions from the Decline in National Test Scores

The American people, judging from present and past survey data, do not share the skepticism of many educators about the significance of standardized tests.

They believe, for example, that the decline in national test scores in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining. Of course, the test scores may only confirm what many already think about the schools.

There is surprising unanimity among all groups in the population that the tests are actually measuring a decline in the quality of education. By majorities of about 2-1, all segments of the population, in all areas of the nation, believe that the tests are correctly assessing the situation.

The first question asked was:

Do you believe that a decline in national test scores of students in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining?

The results by major groups:

	Quality of Education		
	Yes, Is Declining %	No, Is Not %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**59**	**31**	**10**
Sex			
Men	61	31	8
Women	58	31	11
Race			
White	60	31	9
Nonwhite	58	29	13
Age			
18 to 29 years	52	40	8
30 to 49 years	62	29	9
50 years and over	63	26	11
Education			
Grade school	54	25	21
High school	61	29	10
College	58	39	3
Community size			
1 million and over	67	28	5
500,000-999,999	64	29	7
50,000-499,999	62	29	9
2,500-49,999	58	33	9
Under 2,500	50	34	16
Region			
East	62	26	12
Midwest	56	38	6
South	56	31	13
West	66	27	7

All respondents were then asked to explain what they thought brought about the decline in test scores. Each was handed a card listing eight reasons, including one for the doubters reading, "The tests are not reliable."

The second question put to respondents was:

> Here are some reasons that have been given to explain the decline in national test scores. Will you look over these reasons and then tell me which ones you think are most responsible for this decline.

Respondents, who were permitted to choose more than one reason for the decline in test scores, voted in this manner:

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Less parent attention, concern, and supervision of the child	65	64	65	72
2. Students aren't as motivated to do well	52	50	57	53
3. Too much television viewing	49	48	51	51
4. Society is becoming too permissive	49	47	49	61
5. Teachers are giving less attention to students	39	39	41	32
6. It's easier to get into college now	16	20	10	14
7. Schools are expanding the number of courses offered	10	12	8	4
8. The tests are not reliable	16	15	16	16
Other and no opinion	14	13	15	15

Overall, the public places the greatest blame for declining test scores on parents, on society, on children's lack of motivation, and on too much television viewing. Interestingly, parents of children now attending school most often cite the very same top reason for declining scores: "less parent attention, concern, and supervision." Parents themselves are readily accepting the blame and are not try-

ing to place the burden on the schools, as one might expect them to do.

Career Education

The demand for more emphasis on career education continues to be strongly voiced throughout the nation. In almost every study, the public has made known its belief that public school education should train graduates for jobs.

There is obviously confusion in the public's thinking about what constitutes career education and the kind of skills needed in today's society. What does emerge from the various surveys that have covered this point is that the public believes that the public schools should prepare every student to take some kind of job after graduation if he wants to end schooling at this stage of his or her life.

This first question was asked of all respondents:

> Do you think that the school curriculum should give more emphasis, or less emphasis, to careers and career preparation in high school?

Because the public sees many unemployed and unskilled young people, it is quite natural and logical to reach the conclusion that the schools they attended do not give enough attention to job training. What is likely to be overlooked is the need today for persons with language and mathematical skills as well as mechanical skills. In the current survey, 80% say more emphasis should be given to careers in high school.

A second question asked if more information about careers should be given in the elementary schools. Although the majority is small, the number who say this should be done is greater than the number who say this is not necessary.

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
More emphasis	80	80	80	84
Less emphasis	5	4	5	7
About the same as now	11	12	11	8
Don't know/ no answer	4	4	4	1

The second question:

Do you think the elementary school curriculum should, or should not, include information about jobs and careers?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Should	52	52	53	47
Should not	39	38	38	48
Don't know/ no answer	9	10	9	5

Early School-Leaving Age

Some educators see very real advantages in permitting students who meet minimum requirements to leave school early, either to take jobs or to enter junior or community colleges. California has such a law at this time permitting students to leave school early.*

In many instances this practice would rid the school of students who are disruptive and who have no interest in continuing their education. On the other hand, it would permit bright students to start their college careers at an earlier age.

The public, however, has never responded favorably toward proposals for changing present regulations about school age. When questions bearing upon this issue have been asked in these surveys, most respondents show reluctance to change the rules now in effect in their communities, either in respect to leaving age or the age at which children start school.

The public has been found willing to provide special schools and special training for students who are unable to keep up with their classes, and other national surveys reveal a willingness to establish training camps on the order of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. But without some such provision for training and supervision, the public disapproves of letting young people out of school before they reach the legal minimum age.

Parents with children in public school turn down the proposal by

*Among the nearly one million youngsters in California's public high schools, 30,500 took a test last year authorized by this law and 11,350 passed it. State department officials do not know, however, how many of those passing the test actually left school early.

a ratio of 69% to 28%. Those with children in the parochial schools like the idea even less. They oppose it by a ratio of 73% to 26%. The question asked was:

Currently some states are considering legislation which will permit students to leave school as early as age 14 if they can first pass a test showing that they can read, write, and figure with sufficient skill to get along. Those who pass the test and leave school can take jobs if they wish or go on to community college at an earlier age. Do you approve or disapprove of such a plan for letting students leave school at a younger age?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve	30	33	28	26
Disapprove	66	63	69	73
Don't know/ no answer	4	4	3	1

There is close agreement in all segments of society; the vote in nearly every group is about 2-1 against. Greatest support for this plan of lowering the age of compulsory attendance comes from those with the least education. But even this group opposes the idea by a vote of 52% to 41%.

The results by major groups:

	Approve %	Disapprove %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**30**	**66**	**4**
Sex			
Men	34	63	3
Women	27	69	4
Race			
White	30	67	3
Nonwhite	35	57	8
Age			
18 to 29 Years	34	62	4
30 to 49 Years	29	68	3
50 years and over	29	66	5

	Approve %	Disapprove %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Education			
Grade school	41	52	7
High school	26	70	4
College	32	66	2
Community size			
1 million and over	33	64	3
500,000-999,999	33	64	3
50,000-499,999	31	66	3
2,500-49,999	33	66	1
Under 2,500	25	69	6
Region			
East	29	66	5
Midwest	28	69	3
South	33	63	4
West	33	65	2

Courses To Help Parents Help Their Children in School

For many decades, teachers and parents have tacitly accepted something akin to a "territorial imperative." The province of the school was not to be invaded by parents; conversely, the province of the home was off limits to teachers.

This arrangement is rapidly falling apart as it becomes apparent that the schools cannot function properly unless parents cooperate with teachers, and unless teachers give guidance to parents.

It is obvious to parents, and to the public at large, that a new kind of shared responsibility must be accepted if students are to gain most from their education.

Both the public and parents have shown their willingness in many previous surveys to work more closely with the schools. What has been lacking is a *modus operandi.* The proposal presented to respondents in the 1976 survey offers one way that the schools can help parents.

Many good ideas for improving education are turned down because they require higher taxes. The real test, therefore, of how much the public really supports a given proposal is to find out if the people who favor it are willing to have their taxes increased in order to put the proposal into effect.

In the case of the proposal to offer courses for parents as part of the regular public school system, those who favor the idea are also ready to accept a tax increase by a ratio of 51% to 21%.

The first question asked:

> As a regular part of the public school educational system, it has been suggested that courses be offered at convenient times to parents in order to help them help their children in school. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good idea	77	76	78	74
Poor idea	19	18	20	25
Don't know/ no answer	4	6	2	1

And of those who approved the idea, this additional question was asked:

> Would you be willing to pay additional taxes to support such a program?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	51	50	52	50
No	21	21	21	24
Don't know/ no answer	5	5	5	

The most interesting finding when the results are analyzed is that the youngest age group—those from 18 to 29 years old—overwhelmingly supports the idea, and by a greater margin than the older age groups. Parents of children in the public schools vote 78% to 20% in favor of the proposal.

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The results by major groups:

	Good Idea %	Poor Idea %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**77**	**19**	**4**
Sex			
Men	77	20	3
Women	77	18	5
Race			
White	76	20	4
Nonwhite	84	7	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	83	13	4
30 to 49 years	79	18	3
50 years and over	70	23	7
Education			
Grade school	70	20	10
High school	77	19	4
College	81	17	2
Community size			
1 million and over	80	13	7
500,000-999,999	80	18	2
50,000-499,999	80	18	2
2,500-49,999	74	24	2
Under 2,500	72	21	7
Region			
East	76	18	6
Midwest	73	23	4
South	82	13	5
West	75	22	3

Citizen Advisory Committees

School board members and teachers often complain about the lack of citizen interest in school matters. Lack of knowledge about the problems of the schools, especially the financial problems, all too often results in the defeat of school budgets and school bonds.

Both school and community gain when citizens take an active interest in the schools, but without a way to engage the interest and to involve citizens in school problems, nothing much happens. A few individuals will attend school board meetings. The fact remains,

however, that persons in the community who could make the greatest contribution to education have almost no meaningful way to participate.

School boards are typically too busy dealing with financial and staff problems to spend much time on the many educational matters which must be dealt with today. Appointment of citizen advisory committees by the school board offers a practical way—and judging from the survey results, a popular way—to enlist the interest of an amazing number of persons in the community.

That this plan, now followed in some communities, offers great opportunities to involve citizens in the problems of the schools is fully evidenced by the results of the present survey.

The question asked was:

> Some school boards have appointed citizen advisory committees to deal with a number of school problems such as discipline, the curriculum, textbook selection, teacher evaluation, the athletic program, and the like. The committees report their findings to the school board for possible action. If such a plan were adopted here (or exists here), which of these problems would you most like to deal with on a citizen advisory committee?

Only 10% of all those questioned said they would *not* like to serve on such a committee or could not make up their minds. While many of the other 90% who chose committees on which they would like to serve might find it impossible or impractical to carry out their intention, still an extraordinary number of persons in a typical community are sufficiently interested to fill places on a score of committees. And, if such committees were appointed, then hundreds of citizens might be involved in local school matters.

Each person interviewed in the survey was handed a card which listed 20 committees. He was asked if he would like to serve on any one; in fact, he could choose as many as he wished.

The following list shows the percentage of respondents selecting each committee as one on which he would like to serve:

Advisory Committees	Percent Who Would Like To Serve on Such a Committee*
1. Discipline and related problems	47
2. Student/teacher relations	31
3. Career education	29
4. Student dropouts	29
5. Teacher evaluation	28
6. The handicapped student	26
7. Educational costs/finances	22
8. The curriculum	21
9. Education for citizenship	19
10. Work-study programs	19
11. Home study and work habits	19
12. Community use of school buildings	16
13. Pupil assessment and test results	15
14. School facilities	14
15. Public relations of schools	13
16. School transportation	12
17. The athletic program	12
18. Educational innovations	12
19. Extracurricular activities	11
20. Progress of recent graduates	9
None	4
Don't know/no answer	6

*Totals more than 100% because of multiple answers.

Qualities Most Important in Development of a Child

In a society that constantly changes, the qualities that should be developed in its children will change also. What qualities do Americans today regard as most important? Which should be given the most attention by parents and schools? Which are the most neglected?

To shed light on these concerns, the following question was included in the survey:

Of course all of the qualities listed on this card are important in

the overall development of a child. But which *one* do you regard as the *most* important?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Learning to think for oneself	26	26	26	23
2. Ability to get along with others	23	25	20	20
3. Willingness to accept responsibility	21	19	21	26
4. High moral standards	13	11	15	20
5. Eagerness to learn	11	10	13	10
6. Desire to excel	4	6	3	1
Don't know/ no answer	2	3	2	—

All respondents were offered the opportunity to make a second choice among these six qualities. When the second choices are added to the first choices, then "willingness to accept responsibility" moves up to second place, displacing "ability to get along with others," which drops to third place.

Looking at the same list of qualities, respondents were asked:

Which one do you think is most neglected by parents today?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. High moral standards	32	29	36	44
2. Willingness to accept responsibility	30	33	29	23
3. Learning to think for oneself	14	15	11	14
4. Ability to get along with others	8	7	9	7
5. Eagerness to learn	5	4	5	2
6. Desire to excel	4	3	5	5
Don't know/ no answer	7	9	5	5

And as a final question in this series:

And which one do you think is most neglected by schools?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
1. High moral standards	26	24	28	26
2. Learning to think for oneself	15	15	14	11
3. Eagerness to learn	13	14	12	15
4. Willingness to accept responsibility	12	13	10	20
5. Desire to excel	9	8	12	11
6. Ability to get along with others	8	9	8	5
Don't know/ no answer	17	17	16	12

Local Responsibility for Education

The American public is greatly opposed to giving up local responsibility for the public schools, no matter what the encroachments of the state and federal governments. Of course, the state and federal governments, by tying policies to financial grants, can continue to exert much influence on education. But the public, nevertheless, still holds to the principle that local school policies should be set by local school boards.

The question:

Local school policies are set, not only by the local school board, but also by the state government and the federal government. In the years ahead, would you like to see the local school board have greater responsibility in running the schools, or less, than they do today?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Greater responsibility	67	65	67	70
Less responsibility	10	11	10	7
About the same	15	15	17	14
Don't know/ no answer	8	9	6	9

Personal Qualities Desired in Teachers

Just as the school curriculum should change with changing needs, it could be argued that the qualities required of teachers should also change. What do people today regard as the most important qualities in the ideal teacher?

All respondents were asked the following "open" question:

> Suppose you could choose your child's teachers. Assuming they all had about the same experience and training, what *personal* qualities would you look for?

The qualities named by respondents most often, in order of mention:

1. The ability to communicate, to understand, to relate
2. The ability to discipline, ue firm and fair
3. The ability to inspire, motivate the child
4. High moral character
5. Love of children, concern for them
6. Dedication to teaching profession, enthusiasm
7. Friendly, good personality
8. Good personal appearance, cleanliness

All major groups list the qualities most desired in a teacher in almost exactly this same order.

The ideal teacher, in effect, is one who becomes a model of behavior for the young. It is not startling to discover this; a survey 100 years ago would probably have revealed the same thing.

How the Public Feels About Unionization of Teachers

Whether teachers should join unions has been a highly controversial issue in many areas of the United States for many years. At present, most U.S. teachers belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries and working conditions. The question arises as to how the American public currently appraises this situation. Has unionization helped or hurt public school education? This is the question that was put to the public; there was a mixed reaction.

The question:

Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions, and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion, helped, hurt, or made no difference in the *quality* of public school education in the United States?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Helped	22	22	23	24
Hurt	38	38	36	47
Made no difference	27	26	28	25
Don't know/ no answer	13	14	13	4

Older persons are much more likely to say that unionization has diminished the quality of education. The 18 to 29 age group is almost evenly divided. In the bigger cities, where unions tend to be more militant, a slightly greater number say that unionization has "hurt."

Here are the findings among major groups:

	Helped	Hurt	Made No Difference	Don't Know/ No Answer
	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL TOTALS	**22**	**38**	**27**	**13**
Sex				
Men	24	42	25	9
Women	21	34	29	16
Race				
White	21	39	28	12
Nonwhite	26	31	22	21
Age				
18 to 29 years	26	30	34	10
30 to 49 years	24	37	26	13
50 years and over	16	46	23	15
Education				
Grade school	18	39	25	18
High school	20	37	30	13
College	29	40	23	8

	Helped %	Hurt %	Made No Difference %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Community size				
1 million and over	17	40	34	9
500,000-999,999	27	38	26	9
50,000-499,999	25	39	27	9
2,500-49,999	22	37	26	15
Under 2,500	20	36	24	20
Region				
East	20	43	28	9
Midwest	19	40	29	12
South	27	33	23	17
West	23	37	28	12

Extending the Scope of Teacher Bargaining

School boards generally are vested with the responsibility for making decisions with respect to such matters as class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. The public, in the present survey, has shown its readiness to make these matters subject to bargaining. Whether the school boards will eventually accept this view remains to be seen.

The question asked was:

> Some teacher groups want to extend their bargaining powers beyond pay and working conditions. They would like to have the right to negotiate about class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. Would you favor or oppose giving them these added rights?

This is one of the few survey questions in which a significant difference is found between the views of men and women. Men were almost evenly divided on the issue and women favored the change by a vote of 56% to 33%.

Age also makes a great difference. The youngest adult group voted 73% to 21% for extending the scope of teachers' bargaining powers; those over 50 oppose it by a vote of 50% to 38%.

Persons living in the West are almost evenly divided on this issue; those in the Midwest are most in favor of granting wider bargaining rights to teachers.

The findings among major groups:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**52**	**39**	**9**
Sex			
Men	47	45	8
Women	56	33	11
Race			
White	51	41	8
Nonwhite	62	21	17
Age			
18 to 29 years	73	21	6
30 to 49 years	49	42	9
50 years and over	38	50	12
Education			
Grade school	47	34	19
High school	49	42	9
College	59	37	4
Community size			
1 million and over	54	38	8
500,000-999,999	57	36	7
50,000-499,999	56	36	8
2,500-49,999	49	44	7
Under 2,500	46	41	13
Region			
East	51	39	10
Midwest	55	39	6
South	52	34	14
West	48	46	6

Reducing School Costs

With city budgets being squeezed everywhere in the nation, school budgets are being examined critically to see where costs can be cut.

To see which, if any, reductions meet with public acceptance, a list of eight different ways by which budgets could be cut was presented in this survey. Respondents were asked to give their opinion about each one.

The results are quite similar to those yielded by the 1971 survey. In

that year, the public voted in favor, 50% to 32%, of reducing the number of administrative personnel. This year the vote is overwhelmingly in favor, 72% to 19%.*

In fact, parents of children attending public and parochial schools, as well as those with no children in school, all give their approval to reducing the number of administrative personnel.

The question:

> Suppose your local school board were "forced" to cut some things from school costs because there is not enough money. I am going to read you a list of many ways that have been suggested for reducing school costs. Will you tell me, in the case of each one, whether your opinion is favorable or unfavorable.

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
1. Reduce the number of administrative personnel				
Favorable	72	71	71	80
Unfavorable	19	18	21	15
No opinion	9	11	8	5
2. Reduce the number of counselors on the staff				
Favorable	52	51	54	51
Unfavorable	38	36	38	45
No opinion	10	13	8	5
3. Reduce the number of subjects offered				
Favorable	39	39	38	49
Unfavorable	53	52	56	50
No opinion	8	9	6	1

*Gallup's interviewers do not venture information to respondents. For example, they were not permitted to explain that teacher salaries typically constitute some 80% of a district's total operating expenses. In many larger districts, increasing class size by only one student could "save" more money than the elimination of 60% of the administrative staff. —*The Editor*

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
4. Cut out the twelfth grade by covering in three years what is now covered in four				
Favorable	36	38	34	43
Unfavorable	58	54	63	56
No opinion	6	8	3	1
5. Cut out after-school activities like bands, clubs, athletics, etc.				
Favorable	31	29	33	38
Unfavorable	63	64	63	58
No opinion	6	7	4	4
6. Reduce the number of teachers by increasing class sizes				
Favorable	23	26	21	16
Unfavorable	70	66	74	80
No opinion	7	8	5	4
7. Cut all teachers' salaries by a set percentage				
Favorable	18	19	17	16
Unfavorable	74	72	77	78
No opinion	8	9	6	6
8. Reduce special services such as speech, reading, and hearing therapy				
Favorable	10	8	12	7
Unfavorable	85	86	84	89
No opinion	5	6	4	4

Declining School Enrollments

Many school districts have found that, because of decreasing birthrates, school enrollments are down and may decline even further in the decade ahead.

In situations such as this, the question arises as to whether to

reduce educational expenditures accordingly. The public, as the results show here, votes in favor of reducing expenditures.

The question:

> School enrollments in many parts of the nation have declined because of a lower birthrate. If this were to happen here, would you suggest that school expenditures be reduced accordingly?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes	55	58	52	51
No	35	31	38	42
Don't know/ no answer	10	11	10	7

When those who said that expenditures should be reduced accordingly were asked to give their views as to what expenditures could be cut in this situation, the greatest number suggested that "the number of teachers should be reduced." Next in number of mentions was "close schools and combine classes." Others gave a miscellany of suggestions, including reducing athletic programs, extracurricular activities, and supplies.

Responsibility for Moral Behavior

The American people have reached the conclusion that many parents either won't or can't control the behavior of their children. They are ready, therefore, to turn over part of the responsibility to the schools. In the 1975 survey it was reported that 79% of all those questioned favored instruction in morals and moral behavior in the schools. Only 15% opposed the idea. It was also pointed out in the same report that parents of children now in school were, of all groups, most in favor of this instruction.

In the present survey, a sizable majority of those questioned want part of the responsibility for moral behavior turned over to the schools. Just how this can be done raises many issues. A hundred years ago, McGuffey's Readers pointed up a moral in almost every paragraph. Thousands of years ago, parables and folk stories per-

formed this service. The modern equivalent may be the "case history," as discussed in the 1975 report.

The question:

> Parents now have responsibility for the moral behavior of their children. Do you think that the schools should take on a share of this responsibility, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, schools should take on share of responsibility	67	65	69	69
No, they should not	30	31	29	26
Don't know/ no answer	3	4	2	5

Attitudes Toward Juvenile Courts

The American public is dissatisfied with the workings of juvenile courts. Only 6% say these courts are doing an "excellent" job, on the other hand, 41% say they are doing a "poor" job.

In cities of over one million population, a majority—53%—say the job being done by juvenile courts is "poor." Both whites and nonwhites register dissatisfaction with these courts.

Overhaul of the laws dealing with juvenile delinquency is going on in many states, and these reforms may, in time, not only bring a halt to the increasing amount of juvenile crime, but improve the teaching climate of the public schools.

The question:

In your opinion, how good a job do the juvenile courts do here in dealing with young people who violate the law—an excellent job, a fair job, or a poor job?

	Excellent Job %	Fair Job %	Poor Job %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**6**	**37**	**41**	**16**
Sex				
Men	5	37	46	12
Women	7	37	36	20
Race				
White	6	36	40	18
Nonwhite	8	40	43	9
Age				
18 to 29 years	4	45	39	12
30 to 49 years	6	35	41	18
50 years and over	7	32	42	19
Education				
Grade school	10	29	45	16
High school	6	39	39	16
College	4	38	41	17
Community size				
1 million and over	8	29	53	10
500,000-999,999	6	39	40	15
50,000-499,999	5	39	39	17
2,500-49,999	7	43	31	19
Under 2,500	5	35	41	19
Region				
East	6	30	54	10
Midwest	8	45	33	14
South	5	42	31	22
West	4	27	48	21

Live-in Boarding Schools For Children with Bad Home Conditions

Lack of parental interest and responsibility is blamed for the failure of many children to perform in a satisfactory manner in school. In fact, home conditions can be so bad today that children from these

homes are almost certain to present a great and continuing problem to the schools.

One proposal for dealing with this problem is to put such children, who cannot function in a regular school setting, in live-in boarding schools. Here more attention could be given to them and to their educational needs.

While this proposal is approved by nearly four persons in 10, the public is not ready to take on the added financial burden which it thinks would be involved.

The question asked:

> Some children have such bad home conditions that they run away or are unable to function in the regular public school. Should live-in boarding schools be provided at public expense for these children?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, should be provided	39	41	38	35
No, should not be provided	50	46	54	60
Don't know/ no answer	11	13	8	5

Child-Care Centers as Part of the Public School System

The public is not yet ready to have the public school system embrace child-care centers, although the vote on this proposal is close—46% in favor, 49% opposed, with 5% having no opinion.

The greatest vote of approval comes from nonwhites. They vote 76% in favor to 15% opposed. Persons in the 18 to 29 age group also favor the plan by a vote of 64% to 32%. Most opposed are older persons and those who live in the small communities.

The question:

> A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

The response by major groups:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**46**	**49**	**5**
Sex			
Men	46	49	5
Women	46	49	5
Race			
White	42	53	5
Nonwhite	76	15	9
Age			
18 to 29 years	64	32	4
30 to 49 years	43	52	5
50 years and over	35	59	6
Education			
Grade school	45	46	9
High school	47	49	4
College	46	51	3
Community size			
1 million and over	57	40	3
500,000-999,999	50	44	6
50,000-499,999	48	48	4
2,500-49,999	43	51	6
Under 2,500	36	57	7
Region			
East	48	47	5
Midwest	38	59	3
South	52	40	8
West	45	51	4

Further Breakdowns

Detailed or different breakdowns of some of the responses to the 1976 poll questions are provided in this section as a supplement to tables already presented.

The Major Problems

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	22	20	25	30
Integration/segregation/busing	15	16	13	19
Lack of proper financial support	14	14	14	11
Poor curriculum	14	14	13	18
Use of drugs	11	11	12	7
Difficulty of getting "good" teachers	11	9	14	9
Parents' lack of interest	5	5	4	4
Size of school/classes	5	4	5	4
School board policies	3	2	3	3
Pupils' lack of interest	3	4	2	1
Lack of proper facilities	2	1	14	2
Crime/vandalism	2	3	2	1
Communication problems	1	1	1	3
There are no problems	3	2	6	1
Miscellaneous	8	9	8	2
Don't know/no answer	12	16	7	10

(Totals add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

National Test for Graduation

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, they should	65	65	66	64
No, they should not	31	30	30	35
Don't know/no answer	4	5	4	1

National Test Scores

Do you believe that a decline in national test scores of students in recent years means that the quality of education today is declining?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, is declining	59	60	58	64
No, is not	31	30	32	28
Don't know/ no answer	10	10	10	8

Extending the Scope of Teacher Bargaining

Some teacher groups want to extend their bargaining powers beyond pay and working conditions. They would like to have the right to negotiate about class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods. Would you favor or oppose giving them these added rights?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	52	51	54	53
Oppose	39	38	38	43
Don't know/ no answer	9	11	8	4

Juvenile Courts

In your opinion, how good a job do the juvenile courts do here in dealing with young people who violate the law—an excellent job, a fair job, or a poor job?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Excellent job	6	5	6	10
Fair job	37	35	40	38
Poor job	41	44	38	34
Don't know/ no answer	16	16	16	18

Child-Care Centers

A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals	No Children In Schools	Public School Parents	Parochial School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	46	47	44	39
Oppose	49	46	53	59
Don't know/ no answer	5	7	3	2

Composition of the Sample

No children in schools	57%
Public school parents	38%*
Parochial school parents	8%*

*Totals exceed 43% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

	%
Sex	
Men	48
Women	52
Race	
White	88
Nonwhite	12
Religion	
Protestant	56
Roman Catholic	30
Jewish	2
Others	12
Age	
18 to 24 years	17
25 to 29 years	11
30 to 49 years	39
50 years and over	33

Occupation	
Business & professional	22
Clerical & sales	10
Farm	3
Skilled labor	20
Unskilled labor	22
Non-labor force	18
Undesignated	5
Income	
$20,000 and over	22
$15,000 to $19,999	18
$10,000 to $14,999	23
$ 7,000 to $ 9,999	9
$ 5,000 to $ 6,999	9
$ 3,000 to $4,999	10
Under $3,000	7
Undesignated	2
Political Affiliation	
Republican	21
Democrat	45
Independent	32
Other	2
Region	
East	27
Midwest	27
South	28
West	18
Community Size	
1 million and over	19
500,000-999,999	12
50,000-499,999	25
2,500-49,999	17
Under 2,500	27
Education	
Elementary grades	16
High school incomplete	16
High school complete	33
Technical, trade, or business school	6
College incomplete	14
College graduate	15
Undesignated	*

*Less than 1%

The Design of the Sample

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population 18 years of age and older, living in the United States, except for those persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

The design of the sample is that of a replicated probability sample, down to the block level in the case of urban areas and to segments of townships in the case of rural areas. Approximately 300 sampling locations are used in each survey. Interpenetrating samples can be provided for any given study when appropriate.

The sample design included stratification by these four size-of-community strata, using 1970 census data: 1) cities of population 1 million and over; 2) 250,000-999,999; 3) 50,000-249,999; 4) all other population. Each of these strata was further stratified into seven geographic regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, East Central, West Central, South, Mountain, and Pacific. Within each city-size/regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities were selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1970 census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

Within localities so selected for which the requisite population data are reported, subdivisions were drawn with the probability of selection proportional to size of population. In all other localities, small definable geographic areas were selected with equal probability.

Separately for each survey, within each subdivision so selected for which block statistics are available, a sample of blocks or block clusters is drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions or areas, blocks or segments are drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks and each segment so selected, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignment is completed.

Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means on weekends, or if on weekdays, after 4:00 p.m. for women and after 6:00 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting procedure rather than by "call-backs." This procedure is a standard method for reducing the sample bias that would otherwise result from underrepresentation in the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

The prestratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also, minor adjustments of the sample are made by educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau (derived from their Current Population Survey) and by age.

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error; that is, the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population surveyed had been interviewed. The size of such sampling errors depends largely on the number of interviews.

SECTION III

Rita Sappenfield*

A Guide for Conducting a Local Poll

This section, reprinted from *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973,* describes how local attitudes can be measured. If local poll directors wish to employ the same questions asked in the Gallup surveys, they are welcome to do so. The questions are not copyrighted.

Why Survey?

In the public school systems of America, professional personnel are responsible to citizens; boards of education are established to reflect the desires of the public. Therefore, school boards and superintendents need systems to assess community desires, attitudes, and knowledge about the educational process and schooling.

Scientific sampling of public opinion is a means of learning how citizens judge the quality of their schools and the criteria they use in determining the excellence or lack of it in their local school system. Opinion surveys permit investigation of specific educational issues, e.g., community attitudes toward school finances, the professional

*Rita Sappenfield, assistant to George H. Gallup, is almost entirely responsible for this section, reprinted from Chapter 7 of *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1973.* Available from Phi Delta Kappa, Eighth and Union Streets, Bloomington, IN 47401, $2.25 postpaid.

staff, and school board; acceptability of educational innovations; and public awareness of school problems.

The results will permit decision making which is not influenced by pressure groups, telephone feedback, and random discussions—all of which frequently provide faulty conclusions. If surveys are done periodically, with some basic questions repeated, shifts in public opinion and knowledge can be gauged.

This chapter outlines a process your school district can use to determine local public opinion about schools and education. It provides, in a very simple way, a guide to the kinds of information needed. Many books, to which the reader can refer for additional details, have been written on research procedures.

National Comparisons Available

The annual Gallup Polls on the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools provide a bank of more than 100 questions and results. These results do not apply to any single community; they provide a norm for comparison. Questions and results are not copyrighted and no limitations are placed upon the use of information beyond customary credit to source, accuracy, completeness of quotation, etc. Each annual report includes a description of the research procedures and an analysis of results.

Two Prohibitions. While questions and results of each annual survey are available for school district use, users do not have permission to use in any form the name of "Gallup," "Gallup International," "Gallup Poll," etc., nor the name "CFK Ltd.," the publisher of the first Gallup education poll in 1969.

Selection of Survey Questions

From the bank of questions used in the annual Gallup surveys, select those on which information is desired in your district. Probably you'd like to ask every question available. Don't! You will overtax your interviewers and respondents—and have so much data to tabulate and analyze that detail may obscure the total picture. A 30-minute (or less) interview is what you should strive for. The way to determine the length of an interview is to try the questionnaire on one respondent at a time, paring your list of questions until an average interviewer and respondent take no more than half an hour to go through the entire procedure, including the "demographic"

(population statistics) questions. You may want to include questions which have not appeared in the annual national surveys. All questions must be carefully and impartially worded, a task demanding great skill. The following books can provide guidance.

Goode and Hatt, *Methods in Social Research.*

Payne, *The Art of Asking Questions.*

Riley, *Sociological Research: A Case Approach.*

Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, *Research Methods in Social Relations.*

To cut coding and tabulation time, we strongly urge you to use the minimum of "open" questions. For example, in the 1970 Gallup survey, only one "open" question was used.

Design of the Questionnaire

Here is a reproduction of the first page of a typical survey.

Hello, I'm from the _____ public schools. I would like to talk with you about the schools in your community.

1. As you know, in some communities there are three kinds of schools—the public schools, the parochial (or church-related) schools, and the private schools (sometimes called "independent" schools).

a. First, I'd like to know if you, yourself, have any children in the local *public* schools?

☐ Yes, how many ..... ☐ No

b. *Parochial* or *private* schools?

☐ Yes, how many ..... ☐ No

2. What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

3. How much do you know about the goals of your local public schools: quite a lot, not very much, almost nothing?

☐ Quite a lot ☐ Not very much ☐ Almost nothing

We suggest that the interviewer use the opening lines to identify himself* and the purpose of the visit. The first question provides needed information and sets the stage easily.

*For clarity and economy, we use the masculine form of pronouns throughout this section when no specific gender is implied. While we recognize the trend away from this practice, we see no graceful alternative. We hope the reader will impute no sexist motives; certainly none are intended. —*The Editors*

Now, place the selected survey questions in appropriate order. Place questions so that any one question or response does not suggest a response for a subsequent item. For example, in the following list the second two questions could suggest answers for the first question, an undesirable situation.

—What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in the community must deal?

—How do you feel about the discipline in the local schools—is it too strict, not strict enough, or just about right?

—Some people feel the schools do not go far enough in regulating the way boys and girls dress for school. Do you think there should be greater regulation of the way children dress for school, or less?

Before your questionnaire is printed, ask the person who will handle the data processing to properly "pre-code" the "closed" questions (those with answer boxes). Your final questions provide the demographic data. Any or all can be omitted, depending upon the desired degrees of stratification of the results. Those following correspond to the Gallup surveys:

And now, finally, just a few questions about yourself so that we can be sure we have an accurate cross-section of the public.

Could you tell me the kind of business or industry the *chief wage earner (head of household)* in your immediate family works in and the kind of work he does there?

Kind of business _____

Kind of work _____

What was the last grade or class you COMPLETED in school?

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ H.S. Incomplete
- ☐ H.S. Graduate
- ☐ Technical, trade, or business school
- ☐ College, univ. incomplete
- ☐ College, univ. graduate

And what is your age, please? _____

What is your religious preference—Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, or other?

- ☐ Protestant
- ☐ Roman Catholic
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None

(Show Hand-out Card.) Would you please give me the letter of the group which best represents the total annual income, before taxes, of all of the members of your immediate family living in your household?

☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☐ H

Check Whether:

- ☐ White man
- ☐ White woman
- ☐ Nonwhite man
- ☐ Nonwhite woman

Determining the Survey Sample

In sampling terms, the whole is the "universe"—the total population of the school district. The survey director must use a method whereby a representative "sample" (group of citizens), which will represent all elements in the same proportion as they are present in the whole, can be selected from the "universe." For your purposes, the important elements are sex, race, age, occupation, education, economic status, and religious preference. When sampling is performed so that every adult in the school district's population has an equal chance of being selected, the errors of sampling are satisfactorily controlled. The sample approach is a reliable process for selecting respondents within predetermined limits of precision.

"Drawing a sample" requires specific statistical training and skill. We suggest asking the head of the sociology department or school of education at your nearest college to recommend a member of his staff who is qualified.

Maps of the individual areas for interviewing assignments are as important as the process of selecting these areas. The following criteria should be used:

—The maps must show the most recent subdivisions and indicate in detail such features as roads, boundaries of towns, townships, and counties, as well as natural features such as brooks, lakes, and rivers.

—The maps should be black and white so that they can be easily marked and copied, and they should be sufficiently detailed for easy reading.

Such maps are usually available at the city or county engineer's office.

A map reproduction of the assigned area should be prepared for each interviewer. Lines are marked in red ink to indicate the boundaries of the interviewing area; an "x" should be marked to indicate the point at which the interviewer should begin the interview.

Your sampling adviser will tell you how interviewers should select homes, and individuals within each home, for interviews.

Recruitment of Interviewers

At the crux of the data gathering are the interviewers who objectively gather opinions and facts on questionnaires from people in their assigned areas. Parent organizations, American Association of University Women, Jaycees, and other groups of concerned citizens are prime sources of volunteer interviewers. In recruiting, try to obtain a large cross-section of citizens; this helps to prevent a bias in influencing responses to questions. Explain that the assignment will take about 10 hours of each person's time, including a training session to be held on (date). Your sampling adviser will tell you how many interviewers you need. Recruit about 20% more, so that there are substitutes in case of illness or other reasons for some not following through on their assignments.

Training Interviewers

The major tasks to be accomplished during the session are:

1. Persuade interviewers of the importance of the survey and of doing the interviewing to the best of their ability.

2. Emphasize the importance of remaining neutral as the interview is being conducted. This is an absolute mandatory stance on the part of the interviewer.

3. Teach them how to interview. Have them "pair off." Distribute one questionnaire to each pair. Tell them that one in each pair will interview the other. Give them these general rules:

—Read all questions exactly as they are worded. Each word has been included to serve a certain purpose. Changing any word or phrase can alter significantly the meaning of a question and therefore can completely destroy the purpose and usefulness of that question.

—Use number 2 pencils to record responses; these provide the most easily read markings for those who will code and tabulate.

—Use a clipboard or magazine under the questionnaire to provide a firm writing space.

Now have them start the interviews. As problems emerge, a member of the Survey Director's Committee should handle them for that pair. If he thinks it a vital problem, he may stop the entire group, explain the problem and its importance, and suggest how it be handled. Or he may decide to wait until these interviews are

completed and then discuss all problems that emerged and his suggestions for handling them.

The questionnaires are collected and new questionnaires distributed, one to each pair. Now the other person becomes the interviewer.

What have you accomplished? All interviewers are now familiar with the questionnaire, the hand-out cards, the procedures—and hopefully, they've had fun learning.

Close the meeting by telling them when and where they will get their assignments and the importance of following all instructions they receive.

Finally, distribute a printed form telling:

—When and where they will get their assignments (yes, they will forget your verbal instructions).

—The dates and hours of interviewing.

—What to do if they cannot fulfill their commitment.

—When and where they should return the completed questionnaires.

(In using volunteer interviewers you may have to provide baby-sitter services during your training session.)

Interviewing Assignments

Start interviewing within a day or two after the training session. The interviewers are excited and interested at this point; if time lags between training and interviewing, interest will be lost and instructions forgotten. Schedule interviewing time for weekday evenings or anytime on weekends, depending on what is best in your community. In this way everyone has an equal chance of being interviewed, whether he works or not.

Assign a team leader for every 10 interviewers. He assumes responsibility for putting together, picking up, and delivering materials, plus filling in as an interviewer if the need arises.

The envelope in which material will be delivered and returned should contain:

—Instruction sheet

—Identification button or card

—Questionnaires

—Hand-out cards

—Assignment sheets

—Maps

Assign no more than five or six interviews to each volunteer. (Your sampling adviser will have guided you in assigning interviewing locations and quota of interviews for each interviewer.)

We recommend an interviewer not be assigned streets on which he is known, so that respondents will feel more free to express themselves.

It is important to keep good records of which interviewers are assigned to which areas—who still has materials—who has returned materials—who has completed his assignment—who has not.

Processing the Results

The reduction of thousands of questions to a relatively few pages of statistical tables takes three steps:

—*Coding Responses.* To deal with the numerous individual responses for "open" questions, establish a coding system so that replies of the same nature can be grouped into categories. Each category is assigned a number. After carefully reading each response, the "coder" assigns the appropriate number in the margin of the questionnaire. A miscellaneous category covers answers too few to warrant a separate category.

"Closed" questions have been precoded before printing, as suggested in "Design of the Questionnaire."

—*Transferring Data.* Coded responses for each question and the demographic data are then transferred to keypunch cards by the data processing organization. All data is then in a form easily counted and analyzed.

—*Counting and Sorting.* The example below illustrates what can be done with information after keypunching.

Q. Do you think teachers should have the right to strike?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No opinion

The machine counts the answers:

Yes	179
No	206
No opinion	12
Total	397

Results should be tabulated in percentages. Depending on the demographic questions asked, you may get data stratified in many ways. Following are those which correspond to the Gallup reports.

Adults
- No children in schools
- Public school parents
- Parochial and private school parents

Occupation
- Business and professional
- Clerical and sales
- Farm
- Skilled labor
- Unskilled labor
- Non-labor force
- Undesignated

Education
- Elementary grades
- High school incomplete
- High school graduate
- Technical, trade, or business school
- College incomplete
- College graduate
- Undesignated

Sex
- Men
- Women

Age
- Under 21 years
- 21 to 29 years
- 30 to 49 years
- 50 years and over

Race
- White
- Nonwhite

Religion
- Protestant
- Roman Catholic

Jewish
Other

Income (This is the material that appears on the hand-out card. See "Design of the Questionnaire.")

$15,000 and over
$10,000 to $14,999
$ 7,000 to $ 9,999
$ 5,000 to $ 6,999
$ 3,000 to $ 4,999
Under $2,999
Undesignated

High School Juniors and Seniors (if included in survey)

Public school	Under 15 years
Parochial school	16 years
Private school	17 years
	18 years
	19 years and over

Summarizing the Findings

The Gallup reports in the preceding chapters provide ideas and processes which might be used to report your results. Each report contains sections describing the purpose of the study, the research procedure, observations and conclusions, statistical data for each question, and composition of the sample. In addition, your sampling authority should provide you with sections on design of the sample and sampling tolerances.

Some Concluding Comments

While the school district's public opinion poll provides a greater understanding of public attitudes, it provides a general picture, not a precise one.

Do not attempt to use the concepts and processes described in this chapter to predict the results of a forthcoming school election. A different set of procedures must be used for that purpose and they are not described in this chapter.

We wish you great success with your local poll.

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